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AUTHOR Arneson, Pat
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ABSTRACT

Seeking to understand American and Nicaraguan perspectives of the Nicaraguan revolution, a study examined the rhetorical strategies used by Presidents Reagan and Ortega in their speeches. Ten public addresses made by each president in 1985-1986, pertaining to funding for Nicaraguan counterrevolutionary forces, were charted and examined for prevalent themes. The themes were then grouped together by the ideas represented, and the groups were clustered to represent a broader topic of consideration. A discourse analysis based on Kenneth Burke's ideas on myth criticism investigated the mythic structure of each leader's rhetoric. In addition, an agon analysis of the rhetorical texts examined the philosophical perspectives of the two presidents. Analyses indicated that President Ortega's discourse featured the pentadic element "purpose," which corresponds to the philosophical term of mysticism, while President Reagan's discourse featured the pentadic element "agency" which corresponds to pragmatism. These philosophical perspectives are components of each other and as such serve to define each other. Just as a means is implicit in an end for Daniel Ortega's mysticism, purpose is implicit in agency for Ronald Reagan's pragmatism. Findings suggest that the political drama of international policy rhetoric is a viable and necessary area for future study. (Forty notes are attached.) (NKA)

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THE DISCOURSE OF PRESIDENTS RONALD REAGAN AND DANIEL ORTEGA: PEACE IN NICARAGUA WITHOUT CONCESSION

Pat Arneson
Bowling Green State University

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THE DISCOURSE OF PRESIDENTS RONALD REAGAN AND DANIEL ORTEGA: PEACE IN NICARAGUA WITHOUT CONCESSION

In 1776 the Declaration of Independence established for American citizens a right to revolution. This right legally allowed the United States to gain independence from Great Britain in the American Revolution. Perhaps it is because our own revolution occurred so long ago that we have difficulty understanding the revolution in Central America currently underway. Many Americans approach the idea of United States involvement in the Nicaraguan revolution with uncertainty and reservations.

This study seeks to understand American and Nicaraguan perspectives of the situation by examining the rhetorical strategy of each nation's leader. First, the function of myth in political discourse is clarified. Second, the ideas of Kenneth Burke which are applicable to myth criticism are outlined. Third, the mythic structure of each leader's rhetoric is revealed. Finally, an agon analysis of the philosophical perspectives of Presidents Ronald Reagan and Daniel Ortega regarding funding for counterrevolutionary forces is discussed.

In 1957, Mark Klyn harshly evaluated the singular orientation of rhetorical criticism in communication studies. The emphasis placed on rhetorical effect was paralyzing communication scholars from expanding possibilities for research. Klyn recommended that the field redefine rhetorical criticism to mean "intelligent writing about works of rhetoric."[1] Following this, the study of public discourse and its potential to shape society began to be recognized as important. Public discourse such as that between Presidents Reagan and Ortega is significant because of the subject matter they discuss; their rhetoric may realistically incite war between the United States and Nicaragua. The political impact of their rhetoric sends shock waves across continents and oceans.

Political Myth

Political leaders select cultural myths on which to focus as a rhetorical strategy to gain compliance from people. Politicians manipulate societal attention to a specific myth as a means for legitimizing and maintaining their own political power. It must be understood, however, that political myths <u>are</u> the medium which transmits political power (e.g., the state, freedom, liberty). Myths link the elected hero to the community and are used to change people's perceptions in order to regulate and control their deeds.[2]

Political leaders are able to gain the support of the public by correctly gauging the response of their supporters to certain behaviors. Through certain acts, speeches, and gestures, an elected leader's behavior becomes symbolic and evokes common meanings for both the audience and the politician. These meanings shape further political action and reassure the public that the leader is able to responsibly "represent" them. In turn, myths detail citizens' obligations and define their responsibilities in the community.[3]

As a myth is transmitted from one generation to the next, its meaning and content change and a series of individually distinct versions emerge. No one version can embody the meaning of a myth because there is no single doctrine to which all versions can be reduced. A political myth is not a world-view which somehow persists unchanged through all its particular manifestations. The meaning of a myth cannot be determined apart from the context in which it occurs.[4]

Rhetoricians are influenced by cultural myths which in turn enable them to interpret and shape "facts" to guide a desired social perspective. Myths help people to understand their present condition by enabling them to see it as an episode in an ongoing drama. What marks an account as mythic is not its content, but its dramatic form and the fact that it serves as a practical

argument. Myth serves as practical argument by providing the audience with an understanding of the situation being described; this understanding issues a response to the situation in the form of an enthymeme.

As drama, myth has a protagonist and a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end. A myth's success as a practical argument depends on its acceptance as truth. A political myth may explain how the group came into existence and what its objectives are, or it may explain what constitutes membership of the group and why the group finds itself in its present predicament. It often identifies the enemy of the group and promises eventual victory. A myth offers an account of the past and the future in the light of which the present can be understood.

This does not exclude the possibility that the user of myth either deceives him/herself or deliberately sets out to deceive the audience. A myth may be believed to be true by those who understand it, but this does not prevent it from being a set of illusions.[5] It is generally accepted as true if it is consistent with the experience of the people it addresses and if it clarifies a perspective.

Political myths may serve many functions. They may seek to establish a group's union or independence, or they may work to extend the group's territory. Political myths may serve to strengthen the solidarity of a group in the face of a major challenge, or they may serve to encourage the resistance of an oppressed minority. Myths may supply strong arguments for abolishing undesirable institutions, or they may inspire its members with confidence in their achievements and abilities.[6]

When one myth-group challenges another, cultural change emerges. Often the prevalent myth is an attempt to adjust to the unusual social tensions and pressures of a "time of troubles." Myth is the antidote for a disturbed status

quo. The myth-formula customarily involves rationalization, escapism, and legitimation of social elements to serve the interest of change.[7]

A strategic response to uncertainty and doubt is to explain the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. Such a strategy often involves using myths to frame material events because they embody widely held beliefs and values. Myths are familiar because they emerge from the natural functioning of society and uphold the conventional beliefs and values of that society. Myths produce and sustain the social norm. As Murray Edelman states, "The word 'myth' signifies a belief held in common by a large group of people that gives events a particular meaning."[8] Myths are familiar recurring narratives whose content "dramatizes the world vision and historical sense of a people."[9] When viewing an ambiguous situation of the sort represented by the United States-Nicaragua conflict, examining rhetorical texts of the national leaders reveals how the conflict has been mythically defined.

In other words, public discourse is seen as a clash of interacting and often differing discourses of sign systems. The relationship between discourse may best be understood as a dialectical interaction between myths. The next section provides a method for revealing the operant myths.

Kenneth Burke's Contribution to Myth Criticism

The work of Kenneth Burke has never been used to address myth criticism. This section discusses Burke's view of rhetoric, and explicates his method of dramatistic analysis. Burke's critical method presents a means whereby the mythic themes which structure and are structured by discourse may be revealed.

Burke's work examines relationships among components in a language system. He defines rhetoric as "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents." Rhetoric is "rooted in an essential function of language itself . . . the use of language as a symbolic means of

inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.[10]

Burke adds to the traditional definition of rhetoric the notion of identification. Burke's notion of identification says that we form our self or identity through "various properties or substances, including physical objects, occupations, friends, activities, beliefs, and values."[11] When we align ourselves with aspects of the world around us, we share substance with whatever it is we are associating ourselves with. Persuasion is also equated with identification and consubstantiality, because persuasion is the result of identification. Burke explains that "a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identification; his [her] act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself [herself] and his [her] audience."[12]

In his speeches, President Daniel Ortega rallies the people of Nicaragua against the United States. He frequently reminds his countryfolk of the United States military history and oppression in Nicaragua. Ortega effectively associates President Reagan with images of previous United States leaders and soldiers. In this manner, Ortega is able to inspire a preferred attitude toward Reagan and his policies. Effective speakers may persuade people to act in a certain way as a result of an association they rhetorically provide for the audience. Burke has expanded the definition of rhetoric to mean change in attitude or action through identification. Identification supplements the traditional view of rhetoric as persuasion.[13]

In order to understand identification, it is important to also understand the notion of division. Burke sometimes calls division "alienation" or "dissociation." People are divided from each other because our physical bodies separate us. When one person identifies with another person he/she becomes

"substantially one" with that other person. However, at the same time each person is an individual. Therefore, people are both joined and separate. Burke sees the motive for rhetoric as trying to eliminate that division. People communicate with one another to try to resolve their separateness and differences. "Rhetoric is an attempt to bridge the conditions of estrangement that are natural and inevitable and is a means for transcending, to some degree, these conditions."[14]

One function rhetoric performs when associating individuals is to define situations. A speech, for example, is a strategic communication which defines a situation in reponse to the way that situation presents itself to the speaker. A speech shapes a situation by naming the structure and significant elements of that situation. In short, rhetoric helps people act strategically in particular situations.

Rhetoric may be consulted to try to decide what to do in a certain situation. A rhetorical work may provide a vocabulary for codifying and thereby interpreting the situation. Rhetoric may encourage the audience to accept a situation that cannot be changed, or it may provide a guide for correcting a situation. At other times rhetoric may help people justify their conduct, or turn actions that seem to be negative into actions that may be perceived as honorable. The speaker names the situation in a particular fashion; Burke calls the manner in which naming occurs "style." While the same facts may be communicated about a situation, many styles are available to communicate those facts.[15]

The particular style one selects to reveal a perspective is associated with the motive one holds in a particular situation. "Dramatism" is the approach Burke uses to study human motivation. It invites one to consider motives taken from the analysis of drama, and treats language and thought

primarily as modes of action.[16]

Burke's dramatism views language as action which is rooted in motion and characterized by freedom and purpose. In order to examine what motivates symbolic action from this perspective, Burke developed a method of analysis that revolves around five terms. Taken together, these terms are called the dramatistic pentad.

Burke's Dramatistic Pentad

Kenneth Burke defines a rhetorical situation as an act. When examining a situation, Burke encourages the critic to ask "What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?"[17] "Where, when, and under what circumstances was it enacted; what is it in itself and what does it mean; who enacted it; with what was the act performed; and why was the act performed?" In dramatistic terms, the five questions become: what is the scene of the act; what is the nature and meaning of the act; what agent performed the act; what agencies did he/she use; and for what purpose did the agent in the particular scene perform the act using the agencies he/she did?[18]

> In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the act (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the scene (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred; also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (agent) performed the act, what means or instruments he [she] used (agency), and the purpose. 19

Because Burke intended the pentad to be used to analyze rhetorical transactions such as a speech, the pentadic elements are selected from the actual content of the discourse. However, the pentad has been extended to apply to the larger context in which the rhetoric studied is seen as the act and the other elements selected correspond to it.[20] This broadens the

definitions of each of the terms of the pentad.

An "act" is any conscious or purposive action. Therefore, any verb implying consciousness or purpose, regardless of how specitic or general, constitutes an act. "Scene" is the ground, location, or situation in which the act takes place. How the scene is designated is important because this label indicates the scope of the analysis. The scene selected influences the way in which the other terms in the pentad are defined. The "agent" is the group or individual who performs the act. "Agency" is the means used to perform the act or the instruments used to accomplisn it. The "purpose" of the act refers to the agent's private reason for performing the act. Although it may be overt, it is more often unknown to an outside observer. Purpose is not synonymous with "motive." Motive is the much broader term referring to an often unconscious reason for performing an act. Motive may be understood as a "rough, shorthand description" of a situation. An examination of all five elements of the pentad and their interrelationship is needed to discover the motive for a particular rhetorical act.

In addition to these terms Burke sometimes includes "attitude" as an element to be considered when analyzing motive. Burke stated that "on later occasions I have regretted that I had not turned the pentad into a hexad, with 'attitude' as the sixth term."[21] Agency denotes the means in which an act is employed--attitude designates the manner in which the act is accomplished: "To build something with a hammer would involve an instrument, or 'agency'; to build with diligence would involve an 'attitude,' a 'how.'"[22] Each element of the pentad is interrelated with the other elements; Burke calls each association a "ratio."

Ratios of the Pentad

Burke introduces the term "ratio" to describe the relationships among the elements of the pentad. Since all of the terms share in the substance of an act, they are consubstantial. In other words, an act implies the idea of an agent, and the idea of an agent acting implies the idea of a scene in which the act takes place. The eleven ratios he proposes allow for a more detailed examination of the various relationships among the terms: scene-act, scene-agent, scene-agency, scene-purpose, act-purpose, act-agent, act-agency, agent-purpose, agent-agency, and agency-purpose; reversal of the order of the terms in each pair and addition of the reflexive act-act ratio creates the additional ratios.[23]

The ratios are seen as causal relationships or principles of determination. Each ratio focuses on a different relationship of elements in the situation. Examining all of the ratios aids the critic in discovering which term in the pentad receives the greatest attention by the speaker and suggests in what term to look for the motivation of the act. Examining ratios forces the critic to analyze discourse in terms of the relationships presented and necessitates posing relational explanations within the drama.[24]

The ratios may often be interpreted as principles of selectivity rather than as thoroughly causal relationships. In any given situation there will be people with different interests who will select a variety of acts that would be most significant to them. Burke recognizes that varying perceptions may cause people to disagree about what occurred in a given situation. Nevertheless, "any complete statement about motives will offer <u>some</u> <u>kind</u> of answers to these five questions."[25]

The first step in the analysis of symbolic action requires an exhaustive descriptive analytic study of its structure in order to determine what

follows what, and why. In this step, the critic may examine the influence of specific historical events on the symbolic act.

Second, an analysis of the progressive forms of a work leads one to realize that all works have other forms as well, and that to do a structural analysis one must also do a cluster analysis. The object of a cluster analysis is to find out what goes with what, and why.

The third approach which Burke uses to decipher symbolic action is one which is forced on the mind by the results of a cluster analysis. Burke states that a "total drama":

> is analytically subdivided into competing principles, of protagonist and antagonist . . . each of the "principles" possesses satellites, or adjuncts, some strongly identified with one or another of the principles . . . whereas other characters [or images] shade off into a general overlapping background . . . . Such a set of "mediating" characters [or images] is necessary, as a common ground of persons [or images] through which the cooperation of the competing principles can take place. Hence, no matter which of the three the . . . [poet] begins with (agon, protagonist, or antagonist) he [she] cannot give us a full drama [or poem] unless he [she] imaginatively encompasses the other two. 26

Burke calls this the principle of the "agon," or "dramatic alignment," or simply "what vs. what."

To briefly review, first every work is indexed and then schematized in terms of the opposed principles or image clusters. Then the structure is carefully charted and the work is again schematized in terms of the interplay between the opposed principles and the tonal, plot, or spiritual forward movement generated by the interplay. At this point, an intensive agon analysis can begin, for the critic has not prepared the work so that it can be analyzed as a document of and in the drama of human relations, and more specifically as a literary embodiment of the drama of the self in quest. It works out in detail the nature and implications of the dramatic alignments and the introduction, development, and resolution of the dramatic conflict.

The drama of the self in quest is the idea that lies behind the whole theory of symbolic action. The relationships among the elements in the pentad selected will focus on agent-agency, scene-purpose, and attitude-act. Although attitude is not one of Burke's initially proposed ratios, the contribution it presents has been noted and accepted by Burke. The interaction of these three ratios provides insight into each element of the situation and offers the critic a chance to establish a "rounded" account of the situation. The agents in the situation are Reagan and Ortega. The agency they use are rhetorical myths. The scene is the political situation regarding United States funding for counterrevolutionary forces in Nicaragua. The purposes are the aims each hopes to ultimately accomplish by their rhetorical strategies. The acts are the specific speeches each has given to a national and world audience. The attitude is revealed by clusters within each speech text.

This study will examine presidential crisis rhetoric on a comparative basis across national boundaries. It focuses on myths which are used to support the rhetoric of each leader's perspective. It draws on national culture and history as a source for validating and understanding the drama of conflict between the United States and Nicaragua revolving around funding for counter-revolutionary forces.

United States-Nicaragua Political Relations

United States interests in the region include political, economic, and security considerations. National interest demands the existence of "friendly, prosperous states with stable responsible governments that permit the free movement of goods and services throughout the region; that respect the political integrity of their neighbors; and that offer no support to the United States' global political rivals" in the Western Hemisphere.[27]

When ideologies or movements that are alien to democracy appear to be

advancing in Central America, the United States becomes concerned, not only because of the potential military threat but also because of a feeling that the United States is responsible for the nations of this hemisphere. The United States sees the weak nations of the area as being particularly subject to negative influence. Because of their location, these countries are the subject of United States concern.[28]

The region's past political experience has been one of turmoil. To protect Nicaragua from becoming a part of "the Commie-dominated bloc of slave states," the United States has been waging a war against Nicaragua. Part of their strategy includes blocking any source of military supplies from other than the Soviet Union and its clients. This ensures the continuing validity of United States claims that Nicaragua is indeed supported by Communist sources.[29] Current United States policy in Central America is directed toward overthrowing the revolutionary Sandinista government. For these aims to be realized it has been recognized that the present level of means--that is, funding and organizing the anti-Sandinista contras--must be escalated or revised.[30]

President Daniel Ortega is the leader of Nicaragua's FSLN Government of National Reconstruction. The present government is based on a worker-peasant alliance converging with patriotic, anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchic groups. The government seeks to establish a social system without exploitation and poverty. It promotes a mixed economy which is non-aligned internationally. Ortega has worked to dispel negative American impressions of Nicaragua as the center of communism in Latin America. Recently, the Nicaraguan leaders have increased their military response to United States-Honduran naval maneuvers because they are fearful of yet another foreign invasion.

President Ronald Reagan views Nicaragua as a place of Soviet activity. He wishes to strengthen United States supporters and to weaken allies of the

Soviet Union. He feels a military response is necessary to contain the communist threat. He supports internal FSLN opponents and uses outside forces to implement his policies. He seeks to protect the interest of the United States against negative forces in the Western Hemisphere.

The current leaders of each country hold strong opinions about the political situation. Yet, within each country people do not accept the situation as portrayed by their president. This study next examines the rhetoric of each of these leaders to further determine how the struggle against the other is communicated through discourse which depends on political myths.

Operant Myth Structure

To reveal the mythic structure of each speaker's rhetoric, the critic begins by charting the texts of each president's public addresses. First, ten public addresses made by each president between 1985-86 pertaining to funding for counterrevolutionary forces were selected for charting. Each of these speeches was examined for prevalent themes. The themes were separated into different groups depending on the idea(s) they represented. These groups were then clustered to represent a broader topic of consideration.

After the groups of themes were clustered together by topics, each sentence was examined. Themes were examined for cohesiveness within the groups, and the groups were checked for consistent support of each topic. They were reviewed to ensure that they supported similar interpretations and ideas. Next, the themes were broken down to label the pentadic element(s) present. This step served further to clarify the themes, groups, and topics. Following this, phrases representing different elements of the pentad were examined in conjunction with each other to reveal the operating myth of each group. The operating myths of each group were then combined to find the master myth of each topic. Combining the master myths of each topic enabled the philosophical

school of each speaker to be clarified. This leads to the process of agon analysis which is described later following the results of this analysis. The results of this extensive charting process are summarized below in a narrative summary of the myths perpetuated by each speaker.

Myths Perpetuated by the Ortega Administration

The Reagan Administration has been able to persuade Congress to approve funding to implement policies of military and economic aggression against the Nicaraguan people. This funding heavily supports the mercenary forces which have been engaged in order to destroy the Nicaraguan revolution. This terrorist action has proven severely detrimental to church dialogues and international negotiations.

The Nicaraguan people are defending their newly gained independence with nationalistic pride; a volunteer Army has emerged to protect the country from United States invasion. The United States is imposing war conditions similar to Vietnam on Nicaragua because it feels its national security is threatened by the peasants. The American mercenary forces are inflicting many casualties on the Nicaraguan people with the intention of destroying the peasant revolution.

The Nicaraguans are determined to bring peace to the region with the help of internationally negotiated dialogues with the United States. Contrary to Reagan's belief, institutionalizing the revolution will actually ensure the mutual security and democracy of the United States and Nicaragua.

President Ortega has approached the United Nations' International Court of Justice regarding the United States' counterrevolutionary intervention in Nicaragua. The International Court of Justice ruling demanded that the United States military forces leave the area. American soldiers continue to remain in the region because the United States does not hold any respect for international

law. If the International Court of Justice could force the United States to accept its legal obligations, Nicaragua-United States' international relations will improve. This will strengthen democracy in Nicaragua and Central America.

The Central American leaders are concerned about unsolicited United States expansionist presence in Central America to wage war on Nicaragua. The Central American leaders believe that democratic negotiations are the best possible means to bring peace to the region. These discussions bring with them hope for peace to the people of the war-stricken region.

The Central American Governments are sincere in their attempts to reach an agreement between the United States and Nicaragua; they strongly affirm the Contadora and support group's efforts. While the negotiation process has been recognized as an important step to peace, all of the constructive solutions which have been proposed are approached by the United States with cynicism and contempt. Despite the rhetorical support the United States gives to the negotiation efforts, they have effectively boycotted acting on any of the recommendations.

Myths Perpetuated by the Reagan Administration

The communists practice human rights repression throughout the world. Their next target for expansion is the western hemisphere. They have chosen to penetrate Central America, using Cuba and Nicaragua as a base in the region. The United States, as well as other democratic countries, are vulnerable to the communists' acquisitive approach to the region. Unless action is taken immediately, communists will eliminate democracy in the United States. They will do this by using the power which they receive when new governmental systems are established in Central American countries such as Nicaragua.

Cuba's proximity to Nicaragua supports the potential realization of this tragedy. The Sandinistas are in Congress lobbying against the humanitarian

assistance proposal which is the one source that would stop them from expanding the communist regime throughout the region. Humanitarian assistance which supports Contadora and church-mediated negotations will dissolve the repressive Nicaraguan government. Assisted by freedom fighters, the negotiation process enhances the opportunity for a democratic Nicaraguan government which is similar to the El Salvador government. Democratic governments in these two countries is the beginning of a democratic future for the entire region of Central America.

Counterrevolutionary Nicaraguans are seeking badly needed supplies from the United States to assist in their struggle against communist expansion in their country and Central America. Humanitarian assistance will bring hope to the people of the region and strengthen the United States borders against communism.

The current United States leaders are accountable to the American people. It is their responsibility to support the tradition of democracy in a free United States. Previous leaders who provided support for democracy in the face of earlier potential world wars were courageous against the threat of annihilation. The present governmental administrators should learn from their predecessors. Hope for a secure United States is possible only if economic support for democracy in Nicaragua is approved now.

The United States government is in a position where it must decide the fate of Nicaragua, the hemisphere, and the world. Elected representatives of the people are encouraged to consider and accept the proposal which would secure United States interests and block Soviet aggression throughout the world.

Agon Analysis of Perspectives

The final step in myth criticism is agon analysis. In order to understand the rhetoric of motivation it is necessary to inquire into the internal

relationships which the five terms have to one another within and between the speech texts. Having considered the combinations and associations of terms, now the critic seeks to understand how these associations encourage human action in the drama of "self in quest."

Burke proposes that any systematic statement about motives in which these five grammatical resources are specifically utilized may be understood as a "philosophy." Matters of "philosophy" are recognized when different terms are used to represent the ultimate ground or scene of numan action, such as "God," "nature," "environment," "history," or "means of production." A speaker's choice of any single philosophic idiom to embody principles of action is open to question. However, even before people are aware of an act which is to be discussed, it can be said that a discussion of its motives must contain a reference to some kind of background. Each philosophic idiom characterizes this background differently.[31]

Burke's work offers a system of placement that enables the various classes of motivational theory or "philosophy" to be anticipated. Philosophical language can be considered in terms of the pentad, which is used as a generating principle that enables a critic to "anticipate" these different idioms. In treating the various philosophical schools as languages, the relationship of one school to another may be defined.

Dramatistically, each of the different philosophic schools features a different one of the five terms. A vocabularly designed to allow a certain pentadic term full expression places the other terms in the perspective of the featured term. This may occur by slighting any reference to a particular term or by pairing the featured term with another element in the pentad.[32]

This study sought to clarify the motivational scheme of Ronald Reagan and Daniel Ortega. Each leader's rhetoric centered around similar topics.

These topics were the political situation, mercenary warfare, congressional assistance, and peace. The following summary was gleaned from the textual analysis and indicates the main concern of each topic for both presidents. In addition, the pentadic element associated with each person's rhetoric is revealed.

Political Situation

Ortega - Central American conflict (scene)
Reagan - Historical perspective recommended when encountering communist expansionism (scene)

Mercenary Warfare

Ortega - Defense of freedom (purpose)
Reagan - Democratic opposition (agency)

Congressional Assistance

Ortega - Reagan Administration's support of war (purpose)
Reagan - Humanitarian aid (agency)

Peace

Ortega - Peace gained through international justice (purpose)
Reagan - Negotiations (agency)

Reagan's discourse features the pentadic element "agency." The corresponding philosophic terminology Burke has associated with this element is pragmatism. Ortega's discourse features the pentadic element "purpose." The corresponding philosophic terminology associated with this element is mysticism. Each president's philosophical perspective reveals a certain orientation regarding the Central American conflict. In the next section, examples of each leader's rhetoric have been selected which reveal the philosophical school which orients the rhetorical perspective of each leader.

The Pragmatism of Ronald Reagan

This section provides examples from Reagan's speeches that reveal his personal philosophy, which is in turn extended to the public in his rhetoric.

A brief description of pragmatism precedes Reagan's association with the perspective Burke has associated with the term "agency."

According to William James, pragmatism is "a method only." He noted that a pragmatist evaluates a doctrine by its "consequences," what it is "good for," "the difference it will make to you and me," its "function," or by asking whether it "works satisfactorily." A pragmatist looks for the "cash value" of an idea; in the language of capitalism, thought is considered according to a thing's value and is tested by its economic usefulness as a means to satisfy desires.[33]

The selected topic of Reagan's public addresses refers to support for the Nicaraguan democratic opposition. The practical reality of his method is clear. The purpose of his proposal is "to restore peace and democracy" to Central America. The consequences of Congress not supporting the proposal are defined as "the first step down the slippery slope toward another Vietnam." Reagan seeks to "eliminate the communist menace at its source" in Nicaragua by removing "Soviet military and security personnel." This will "keep America safe, secure, and free," because "the security of the United States depends on the safety of unthreatened borders." The agency Reagan proposes will work by putting "pressure" on the Sandinistas to negotiate. This assures the "democracy" will win in the region; "the path to democratic peace is dialogue in church-mediated negotiations." Regarding the usefulness of his proposal, Reagan remarked, "assistance will be one way to meet [the United States'] obligations to help those striving for democracy."

The qualities of mysticism or idealism can be seen in pragmatism. In other words, particular means are necessary in order to achieve a desired end. For example, in order to achieve democracy in Nicaragua the humanitarian assistance package must be approved. The relationship between agency and purpose is again clear in the phrase "freedom fighers." Agency is indeed a

function of purpose.

The Mysticism of Daniel Ortega

Mysticism embraces forms of speculative thought which "profess to attain an immediate apprehension of the divine essence or the ultimate ground of existence." Mysticism perceives the current state of affairs as separation from the source of things or the ideal. It therefore yields to a form of metaphysical fascination. References to "the divine essence," "the creative source," and "the Being of beings" indicate why mysticism is equated with the pentadic term purpose.[34]

The manner with which Ortega approaches the Central American conflict is certainly mystical. His country "supports just causes around the world," despite the fact that "patriotic and honest Nicaraguans are being killed while defending their homeland's sovereignty." Strength is with the Sandinistas. "We have been able to fight the aggression" because "we have morals, reason, and justice on our side."

Ortega intimately associates the Nicaraguan people with the purpose of peace. "The Nicaraguan people will exist forever. We have a disposition for peace." The "peacemakers" are "fighting for peace" to achieve their universal goal.

President Ortega's personality has been described as "very intense." He is the only Central American leader who wears a military uniform. The revolutionary's goals are phrased in idealistic terms; Ortega seeks to create "a social system that wipes out the exploitation and poverty that our people have been subjected to."[35]

Mystical philosophies are socially manifest in times of great skepticism or confusion about the nature of human purpose. They mark a social transition;

when one set of public presuppositions about the ends of life has become weakened or disorganized, and no new satisfying public structure has yet taken its place, mystical myths are in order. In such times of social hesitancy, a mystic can compensate for his/her own particular doubts about human purpose by identifying him/herself on some vision of a universal, or transcendent purpose.

Burke claims that seeking communication with a higher purpose is a unification process which implies transcending disunity.[36] This is clearly indicated in a statement Ortega has made regarding his perspective of freedom.

> I always think of freedom in the plural. Freedom is for the people here, not the individual. Freedom has an integral character linking the individual to the group. It is not simply what the individual feels, it is the action of the individual within society which organizes the rights of each to the benefit of all. Society limits, of course, those aspects of individual freedom that go against the common effort in all phases of life. 37

From an individual standpoint, this definition of freedom is actually a definition of "unfreedom." However, Ortega continues to be respected by Nicaraguan conservatives as well as radical leftists. "Ever flexible, he still believes, ideally, in political pluralism and a mixed economy despite some of the turns [actions] the revolutionary government has been forced to take.[38]

The philosophies of pragmatism and mysticism join together at this point. Ortega sees a means as a way of accomplishing a particular goal designed to achieve a purpose. Democracy will be institutionalized in Nicaragua after defeating the mercenary forces. Just as a means is implicit in an end for Ortega's mysticism, purpose is implicit in agency for Reagan's pragmatism. Agencies are methods used to achieve a purpose or goal.

Pragmatism and Mysticism as Agency and Purpose

There is a point at which mysticism and pragmatism become indistinguishable. Both involve a narrowing of motivational circumference. Pragmatism accomplishes

this by deliberately eliminating purpose as a term (except that the materialist is generally willing to tell others the purpose for eliminating purpose). Mysticism arrives at somewhat the same result unintentionally. By making purpose an absolute, purpose in effect transforms itself into a fatality. When a purpose is achieved it is no longer a purpose.[39]

A stress upon purpose leads into a consideration of all policies in terms of means and ends alone. That is, the terms scene, act, and agent fall away as people talk simply of purposes and agencies associated with these purposes. From a "dramatistic" standpoint, this is a truncated statement of the case. This would require a consideration of the resources (as they are related to agency) and obstacles of scene (as they are related to purpose) while seeking a hierarchy of the pentadic arrangement.[40]

An agon analysis of a rhetorical text reveals the philosophical perspective of each country's leader. It reveals their world orientation which calls for and reinforces specific actions, much as myth functions in the public arena. Each leader's rhetorical responses draw on supporting cultural myths which influence and are influenced by his philosophical perspective. Burke's rhetorical method allows this orientation to be revealed.

Central to Burke's pentad is the notion that interrelationships or ratios between the terms (and therefore philosophical schools) enable the situation to be more fully understood. The rhetorical significance of an agon analysis is that it potentially reveals the persona behind the political rhetoric and actions of a national leader.

The pragmatism of Ronald Reagan and the mysticism of Daniel Ortega each emphasize a different approach to the world. These philosophical perspectives are components of each other and as such serve to define each other. Pragmatism seeks a means to an end; purpose is the end which the means seeks. In Reagan's

case, for example, war is seen as a means to peace.

However, a rhetorical definition of a situation does not ultimately mean that the promoted scene is the only possible reality. For the public, in a sense, being forewarned is being forearmed. The dichotomous philosophical perspectives which these two leaders promote deflect attention from potential common ground between the two extremes. Relying on such dichotomous perspectives denies the possibility of other alternatives which may very realistically provide mutual satisfaction for both nations.

The influential positions these men hold in world affairs warrants continued attention to their communication, especially since their communication has much to do with whether peace or war characterizes the history of the next decade. From 1984 to the present, United States military support for Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries against the National Government for Reconstruction has rapidly escalated. Leaders from both sides of the opposition have frequently addressed this issue, despite their very different communication agendas.

The rhetoric of international affairs is an important area for communication research. The world is viewing a situation in which terrorists are seizing jetliners and threatening and murdering unarmed passengers. Also, military intervention in conflicts may move the world closer to a nuclear confrontation. In the United States this has forced elected American officials to "lead" people rather than mirror the will of the people. The political drama of international policy rhetoric is a viable and necessary area of study for the future. This paper has outlined one method by which such study may be undertaken.

Notes

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[3]Cuthbertson, Political, p. 156.

[4]Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), p. 188.

[5]Henry Tudor, Political Myth (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 91.

[6]Tudor, Political, pp. 137-138.

[7]Cuthbertson, Political, pp. 159-160.

[8]Murray Edelman, Politics as Symbolic Action (New York: Academic, 1964), p. 14.

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[10]Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives (1950; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 41, 43.

[11]Ibid., pp. 21-24.

[12]Ibid., p. 46.

[13]Sonja K. Foss, Karen A. Foss, and Robert Trapp, Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric (Prospect Heights: Waveland, 1985), p. 158.

[14]Ibid., pp. 159-160.

[15]Kenneth Burke, Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), pp. 50-58.

[16]Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. xxii.

[17]Ibid., p. xv.

[18]William H. Rueckert, Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), p. 73.

[19]Foss, Contemporary, p. 168.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., p. 170.

[22]Burke, Grammar, pp. 20, 236, 242, 443, 476.

[23]Ibid., pp. xix, 3, 15, 18-19, 53.

[24]Foss, Contemporary, p. 171. Rueckert, Burke, p. 74.

[25]Burke, Grammar, pp. xv, 18.

[26]Rueckert, Burke, pp. 83-84.

[27]Jack Child, ed., Conflict in Central America: Approaches to Peace and Security (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), p. 22.

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[31]Burke, Grammar, p. xvii.

[32]Ibid., p. 127.

[33]Ibid., p. 277.

[34]Ibid., p. 297.

[35]Charles Moritz, ed., "Ortega, Daniel," Current Biography Yearbook 1984 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1984), p. 309.

[36]Burke, Grammar, p. 297.

[37]Robert Wilson, "The Hearts and Minds of the Sandinistas," USA Today 27 March 1987, P. A5.

[38]Moritz, "Ortega," p. 313.

[39]Burke, Grammar, p. 291.

[40]Ibid., p. 317.